

**U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
White River Field Office
73544 Hwy 64
Meeker, CO 81641**

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

NUMBER: CO-110-2005-122-EA

CASEFILE/PROJECT NUMBER (optional):

PROJECT NAME:

- Grazing Permit Renewal for Noels Contracting Inc. (0501401), Red Rocks Allotment (06371)

LEGAL DESCRIPTION:

Legal Description					
Allotment		BLM Acres	Twp.	Range	Section(s)/Lots or Portions Of
Name	No.				
Red Rocks	06371	877	5N	103W	4, 5, 8, 9
			6N	103W	28, 29, 30, 32, 33
			6N	104W	24, 25

APPLICANT: Noels Contracting Inc. (0501401), C/O Marvin Noel

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES:

Background/Introduction: The Red Rocks allotment contains two separate pastures (north and south) located in western Moffat County, Colorado. Both pastures are accessed from the National Park Service's Dinosaur National Monument (DNM) paved Harpers Corner road that traverses onto Blue Mountain from Highway 40 beginning at the DNM visitor center located in Dinosaur, Colorado in Moffat County.

The north pasture of the Red Rocks allotment is located approximately 11 miles north of the DNM visitor center. Within the north pasture, DNM lands forms the northern boundary, the fenced Harpers Corner road forms the southern boundary, and fences create the east and west boundary. The upper portion of Cottonwood Canyon forms the watershed basin within the north pasture that drains directly into the Yampa River. The elevation ranges from 7800 feet in the western portion of the allotment to 7600 feet in Cottonwood Canyon.

The south pasture of the Red Rocks allotment is located approximately 13.3 miles north of the DNM visitor center. Within this pasture, the fenced Harpers Corner road forms the western

boundary and other fences create the east, north, and south boundaries. The upper portion of Red Rocks Canyon forms the watershed basin and drains directly into the Yampa River within the northern portion of the pasture. Within the southern part of the pasture, the upper end of Robinson Draw forms the watershed basin that eventually drains into the Yampa River. The elevation ranges from 8249 feet at Stuntz Ridge to 7682 feet in Red Rocks Canyon

The table below is an acre breakdown by land status for the Red Rocks allotment.

Breakdown of Acres Controlled by Noels Contracting (0501401)					
Allotment		BLM Acres	State Acres	Private Acres	Total Acres
Name	Pasture				
Red Rocks	North	519	0	374	893
	South	358	0	859	1217
	Total:	877	0	1233	2110

Annual rainfall on the allotment is within the 12-16 inch precipitation zone. Annual precipitation at the nearby DNM visitor center (Dinosaur, Colorado), whose elevation is lower at 5935 feet, is 11.56 inches with the wettest months being April, May, and October.

Noels Contracting acquired the Red Rocks allotment in 1994 from Dave Jolley. Upon acquisition of the Red Rocks allotment, Noels Contracting completely rested the allotment from livestock grazing for 2 years to provide a regrowth and recovery period for the native vegetation.

The previously held grazing permit (Jolley, Dave-1401) with DNM that adjoined the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Red Rocks allotment was terminated on 09/30/85. Therefore, the previously allocated DNM Animal Unit Months (AUMs) were removed from the BLM grazing permit, which increased the % Public Land (% PL), shortened the grazing season from 06/01-10/10 to 06/01-10/04 and reduced cattle numbers from 95 to 65, with BLM AUMs remaining the same. The DNM boundary is currently unfenced from the Red Rocks grazing allotment. Therefore, cattle have access onto DNM but Noels Contracting's BLM grazing permit (0501401) does not authorize nor give credit, in the form of a reduced % PL, for cattle use on DNM.

Grazing allotments within the White River Field Office (WRFO) have been placed in one of three management categories that define the intensity of management: (1) Improve, (2) Custodial and (3) Maintain. These categories broadly define rangeland management objectives in response to an analysis of an allotment's resource characteristics, potential, opportunities, and needs.

Allotment Categorization for allotments analyzed in this permit renewal:

- Red Rocks – Maintain

A. Proposed Action (Continuation of Current Management): Renewal of Noel Contracting's grazing permit (0501401) for a 10 year period as outlined in the proposed grazing permit table below. The Percent Public Land (% PL), which is the percentage of BLM (Active) AUMs in relation to total AUMs (BLM, Private), was recalculated for both pastures of the Red Rocks allotment. The south pasture has been adjusted from the previous 12% PL to 26 % PL and the north pasture will remain at 61% PL. This adjustment of the % PL will not influence the

number of livestock nor the begin and/or end dates of the grazing season, thus there will be no affect on BLM analysis.

Proposed Grazing Permit (0501401) for Noels Contracting, Inc.										
Allotment		Livestock		Date		% PL	BLM AUMs	Active AUMs	Susp. AUMs	Total AUMs
Name	No.	Number	Kind	On	Off					
Red Rocks -South Pasture	06371	65	C	06/01	08/15	26%	42	107	0	107
Red Rocks -North Pasture	06371	65	C	08/16	10/04	61%	65			

Current Grazing Permit (0501401) for Noels Contracting, Inc.										
Allotment		Livestock		Date		% PL	BLM AUMs	Active AUMs	Susp. AUMs	Total AUMs
Name	No.	Number	Kind	On	Off					
Red Rocks	06371	65	C	06/01	08/15	12%	19	85	73	158
Red Rocks	06371	65	C	08/16	10/04	61%	65			

Rangeland Improvements Necessary to Implement the Grazing System:

No rangeland improvements (RI) are proposed to implement the grazing system. Future evaluations of allotment conditions may identify improvements that would aid in achieving objectives. In which case, a separate Environmental Assessment (EA) would be compiled to approve any such new RI on a site specific basis.

Monitoring and Evaluation: Three trend sites are located within the Red Rocks allotment and were established in 1980 and re-read in 2005. Originally, these trend sites included a permanent, repeatable 3'X3' photo plot and associated Range Trend Plot to determine vegetative cover. In 2005, permanent and repeatable 100' Daubenmire transect lines were established to measure ground cover and frequency at each existing trend site. The existing permanent, repeatable photo plots were retained and photographs were retaken.

The study sites were established in a key area to monitor livestock grazing use. The study site was established under protocol developed in the *Grazing Allotment Monitoring Plan for the White River Resource Area*. The next cycle for reading the trend studies will be in 4-5 years (2009, 2010), and/or in 9-10 years (2014, 2015), prior to the future renewal of the grazing permit for Noels Contracting in 2015. Future readings of trend studies by BLM staff are partially dependent upon future workload capabilities and priorities.

Trend plot 06371-3 is located in the south pasture and was destroyed by an abandoned dozer line. A new photo plot and Daubenmire transect were established in 2005 within the vicinity of the original destroyed plot.

Grazing Permit Terms and Conditions:

The following terms and conditions as required by 43 CFR 4130.3 would be included in the grazing permit issued under this alternative:

1. It is unlawful for the permittee, agents or employees to knowingly disturb or collect cultural, historical or paleontological materials on public lands. If cultural, historical or

paleontological materials are found, including human remains, funerary items or objects of cultural patrimony. The permittee is to stop activities that might disturb such materials, and notify the authorized officer immediately.

2. The permittee or lessee must provide reasonable administrative access across private and leased lands to the BLM for the orderly management and protection of the public lands, as outlined 43 CFR 4130.3-2(h).
3. No grazing use can be authorized under this grazing permit/lease during any period of delinquency in the payment of amounts due in settlement for unauthorized grazing use.
4. Grazing use authorized under this grazing permit/lessee may be suspended, in whole or in part, for violation by the permittee/lessee of any of the provisions of the rules or regulations now or hereafter approved by the Secretary of the Interior.
5. This grazing permit/lease is subject to cancellation, in whole or in part, at any time because of:
 - a. Noncompliance by the permittee/lessee with rules and regulations now or hereafter approved by the Secretary of the Interior.
 - b. Loss of control by the permittee/lessee of all or a part of the property upon which it is based.
 - c. A transfer of grazing preference by the permittee/lessee to another party.
 - d. A decrease in the lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management within the allotment(s) described herein.
 - e. Repeated willful unauthorized grazing use
6. This grazing permit/lease is subject to the provisions of executive Order NO. 11246 of September 24, 1965, as amended, which sets forth nondiscrimination clauses. A copy of this order may be obtained from the authorized officer.
7. The permittee/lessee must own or control and be responsible for the management of the livestock authorized to graze under this grazing permit/lease.
8. The authorized officer may require counting and/or additional/special marking or tagging of the livestock authorized to graze under this grazing permit/lease.
9. The permittee's/lessee's grazing case file is available for public inspection as required by the Freedom of Information Act.
10. In order to improve livestock distribution on the public lands, all salt blocks and/or mineral supplements will not be placed within a 1/4 mile of any riparian area, wet meadow, or watering facility (either permanent or temporary) unless stipulated through a written agreement or decision in accordance with 43 CFR 4130.3-2(c).

11. In accordance with 43 CFR 4130.8-1(F): Failure to pay grazing bills within 15 days of the due date specified in the bill shall result in a late fee assessment. Payment made later than 15 days after the due date, shall include the appropriate late fee assessment. Failure to make payment within 30 days may be a violation of 43 CFR Sec. 4140.1(b) (1) and shall result in action by the authorized officer under 43 CFR Secs. 4150.1 and 4160.1-2 (Trespass).

B. No Grazing Alternative: No livestock will be authorized on the current permitted Red Rocks allotment. Therefore, the grazing permit (0501401) will not be renewed to Noels Contracting, Incorporated.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT NOT CARRIED FORWARD: None

NEED FOR THE ACTION: The grazing permit (0501401) for the Red Rocks allotment (06371) originally expired on 02/28/05 and was reissued under an Appropriations Rider in accordance with Section 325, Title III, H.R. 2691, Department of the Interior and related agencies Appropriations Act, 2004 (P.L. 108-108), which was enacted on November 10, 2003.

The rationale for issuing the permit under the Appropriations Rider was due to BLM workload priorities as no work had been completed in accordance to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) at the time of permit expiration. Therefore, this document's Environmental Assessment (EA) will serve in meeting NEPA requirements which will analyze the environmental impacts of the proposed grazing permit.

These permits are subject to renewal or transfer at the discretion of the Secretary of the Interior for a period of up to 10 years. The BLM has the authority to renew the livestock grazing permit/lease consistent with the provision of the *Taylor Grazing Act*, *Public Rangelands Improvement Act*, *Federal Land Policy and Management Act*, and the *White River Resource Area Resource Management Plan* (RMP). This Plan has been amended by the *Standards for Public Land Health in Colorado*.

In order to graze livestock on public land, the livestock permittee must hold a valid grazing permit. The grazing permittee has a preference right to receive the permit, if grazing is to continue. The RMP allows for grazing to continue on these allotments.

PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW: The Proposed Action is subject to and has been reviewed for conformance with the following plan (43 CFR 1610.5, BLM 1617.3):

Name of Plan: White River Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan (ROD/RMP).

Date Approved: July 1, 1997

Decision Number/Page: 2-10, 2-22 through 2-26

Decision Language: “Sustain a landscape composed of plant community mosaics that represent successional stages and distribution patterns that are consistent with natural and regeneration regimes, and compatible with the goals identified in Standard Three of the Standards for Public Land Health” (2-10). Also, as stated on page 2-10, the objective of the livestock management program is to improve the rangeland forage resources by managing toward or at a desired plant community (potential natural plant community).

“Maintain or enhance a healthy rangeland vegetative composition and species diversity, capable of supplying forage at a sustained yield to meet the demand for livestock grazing. Provide for adequate forage plant growth and/or regrowth opportunity necessary to : 1) replenish the plants food reserves; and 2) produce sufficient seed to meet the reproduction needs necessary to maintain an ecological presence in the plant community ” (2-22 through 2-23).

COMPLIANCE WITH SECTION 302 OF FLPMA RELATIVE TO THE COMB WASH GRAZING DECISION: A review of applicable planning documents and a thoughtful consideration of the new issues and new demands for the use of the public lands involved with these allotments have been made. This analysis concludes that the current multiple use allocation of resources is appropriate.

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT / ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES / MITIGATION MEASURES:

STANDARDS FOR PUBLIC LAND HEALTH: In January 1997, Colorado Bureau of Land Management (BLM) approved the Standards for Public Land Health. These standards cover upland soils, riparian systems, plant and animal communities, threatened and endangered species, and water quality. Standards describe conditions needed to sustain public land health and relate to all uses of the public lands. Because a standard exists for these five categories, a finding must be made for each of them in an environmental analysis. These findings are located in specific elements listed below:

STANDARDS FOR PUBLIC LAND HEALTH							
	Current Situation			With Proposed Action		With No Grazing	
Standard	Acres Achieving or Moving Towards Achieving	Acres Not Achieving	Causative Factors	Acres Achieving or Moving Towards Achieving	Acres Not Achieving	Acres Achieving or Moving Towards Achieving	Acres Not Achieving
#1-Upland Soils							
Red Rocks 06371	850	22	Historic grazing practices.	850	22	850	22
#2-Riparian Systems (Miles)							

STANDARDS FOR PUBLIC LAND HEALTH							
	Current Situation			With Proposed Action		With No Grazing	
Standard	Acres Achieving or Moving Towards Achieving	Acres Not Achieving	Causative Factors	Acres Achieving or Moving Towards Achieving	Acres Not Achieving	Acres Achieving or Moving Towards Achieving	Acres Not Achieving
Red Rocks 06371	0.25	0		0.25	0	0.25	0
#3-Plant Communities							
Red Rocks 06371	850	22	Historic grazing practices.	850	22	850	22
#3-Animal Communities							
Red Rocks 06371	877	0		877	0	877	0
#4-Special Status, T&E Species							
Red Rocks 06371	877	0		877	0	877	0
#5-Water Quality (stream miles)							
Red Rocks 06371	5.22	0	N/A	5.22	0	5.22	0

CRITICAL ELEMENTS

AIR QUALITY

Affected Environment: The proposed grazing permit renewal is located immediately adjacent to a class II air shed (Dinosaur National Monument) with special designations regarding visibility.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Drought conditions combined with the impacts of livestock use may reduce ground cover increasing the potential for fugitive dust production. Increased levels of fugitive dust may reduce visibility within Dinosaur Natl. Monument. However, with the proposed conditions of use no impacts to air quality are anticipated.

Environmental Consequences of the No Grazing Alternative: None

Mitigation: None

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Affected Environment: The Red Rocks allotment contains two separate pastures. There are no recorded sites in either pasture. A Class III pedestrian survey of a random 25 acres in each pasture revealed no new cultural resource sites.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: None

Environmental Consequences of the No Grazing Alternative: None

Mitigation: The operator is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the project operations that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing historic or archaeological sites, or for collecting artifacts. If historic or archaeological materials are uncovered during any project or construction activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities in the immediate area of the find that might further disturb such materials, and immediately contact the authorized officer (AO). Within five working days the AO will inform the operator as to:

- whether the materials appear eligible for the National Register of Historic Places
- the mitigation measures the operator will likely have to undertake before the site can be used (assuming in situ preservation is not necessary)
- a timeframe for the AO to complete an expedited review under 36 CFR 800-11 to confirm, through the State Historic Preservation Officer, that the findings of the AO are correct and that mitigation is appropriate.

If the operator wishes, at any time, to relocate activities to avoid the expense of mitigation and/or the delays associated with this process, the AO will assume responsibility for whatever recordation and stabilization of the exposed materials may be required. Otherwise, the operator will be responsible for mitigation cost. The AO will provide technical and procedural guidelines for the conduct of mitigation. Upon verification from the AO that the required mitigation has been completed, the operator will then be allowed to resume construction.

2. Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(g) the holder of this authorization must notify the AO, by telephone, with written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony. Further, pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(c) and (d), you must stop activities in the vicinity of the discovery and protect it for 30 days or until notified to proceed by the authorized officer.

INVASIVE, NON-NATIVE SPECIES

Affected Environment: Cheatgrass is an invasive, non-native species that is located on a limited basis on BLM lands within the north pasture (T6N, R103W, Sec 29, NE). It is apparent that this cheatgrass population is related to an old/abandoned sheep bed ground as the cheatgrass is relegated to a hillside that is typical of sheep bedding.

There are no known infestations of Colorado listed noxious weeds located on BLM administered lands within the Red Rocks allotment. Musk thistle is located on a very limited scale on private lands within the south pasture near a water source in Robison Draw (T5N, R103W, NWNW, Sec 9).

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: In reference to the cheatgrass population, this rangeland with cheatgrass has crossed a transitional stage and is essentially a stationary plant community which, without a human induced disturbance such as fire or herbicidal treatment to remove cheatgrass dominance, accompanied by chemical treatment and/or seeding of adapted perennial grasses to preempt the return to cheatgrass dominance, is likely to remain in its present state. Cattle make little use of this slope where cheatgrass occurs, thus are having no discernable influence on the cheatgrass population. This cheatgrass population will remain virtually unchanged into the future regardless of livestock grazing.

The proposed action alternative offers the best potential to maximize vigor of the grass component of the various ecological sites involved on BLM administered lands. These sites will necessarily be more resilient to invasion by such undesirable species. While noxious weeds readily invade rangelands at all seral stages, the rate and extent of invasion would be much less for mid and late seral rangelands with a vigorous, competitive complement of perennial grasses, shrubs, and forbs.

The grazing permittee is active in controlling noxious weeds on BLM administered lands and private lands within the Red Rocks allotment. Therefore, the proposal will enable the grazing permittee to continue as the first line of defense in the discovery and eradication of noxious weeds.

Environmental Consequences of the No Grazing Alternative: No grazing would allow full growth potential of the vegetative community after being grazed by deer and elk. A robust plant community is more resistant to the invasion of invasive, non-native species.

Without Noels Contracting holding a grazing permit, they likely would not be active in the control of noxious and invasive plant species on private and BLM administered lands within the Red Rock allotment. Therefore, there is a greater potential for not detecting the establishment of non-desirable plants as the permit holder is typically the first line of defense in the detection and eradication of non-native, invasive plant species.

Mitigation: None

MIGRATORY BIRDS

Affected Environment: Both the north and south pastures of the Red Rocks allotment are comprised of Wyoming, mountain and black sagebrush with an understory of native grasses including June grass and sandberg bluegrass. Mountain shrub and pinyon-juniper woodlands are located in the higher elevations. This shrubland community typically provides nesting and foraging habitat for a large array of migratory birds during the breeding season (May – July).

Those bird populations identified as having higher conservation interest (i.e., Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory, Partners in Flight program) that are commonly found in these habitats include Brewer's sparrow and green-tailed towhee. None of the species associated with this community are narrowly restricted in abundance, distribution, or habitat preference.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: It is unlikely this action would reduce the extent or quality of habitat available for migratory bird breeding functions. Under the proposed grazing schedule, livestock would not be put on to the north pasture until 16 August, past the critical timeframe for breeding purposes. Although the southern pasture experiences use during a portion of the breeding season, an inspection conducted in early July indicated relatively little by livestock on the BLM portion of the allotment, due mainly to the lack of water availability.

Environmental Consequences of the No Grazing Alternative: The effects of livestock removal on this allotment's vegetation resources as forage and cover for migratory birds would not be expected to differ markedly from the proposed action. The most prominent difference would likely result in minor increases in the amount of herbaceous groundcover for nesting and foraging purposes.

Mitigation: None

THREATENED, ENDANGERED, AND SENSITIVE ANIMAL SPECIES (includes a finding on Standard 4)

Affected Environment: There are no threatened or endangered animal species that inhabit or derive important benefit from this allotment. The sagebrush shrubland community that comprises a majority of the allotment provides habitat for a small number of greater sage-grouse, a BLM sensitive species. During late summer, these birds tend to congregate in the drainages and swales, where they feed primarily on invertebrates and broadleaf vegetation. Allotment inspections conducted in early July indicated very low use by sage-grouse on the northern pasture. The southern pasture exhibited little use by sage-grouse, due mainly to sagebrush stature.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: It is unlikely that the proposed action would have any measurable affect on the extent or quality of habitat for sage-grouse nesting and/or brooding purposes. Although livestock are present within the southern pasture during a portion of the sage-grouse breeding season, an inspection conducted in early July indicated relatively little use by livestock on the BLM portion of the allotment. Any subsequent use by cattle is not likely to negatively impact sage-grouse breeding functions as young are no longer reliant on herbaceous cover at this time.

Livestock are not turned on to the northern pasture until mid-August, past the nesting and brood-rearing timeframe. There would be little competition for herbaceous forage as most birds have switched from and herbaceous/insectivorous diet and have begun to feed mainly on sagebrush by late-August to mid-September.

Environmental Consequences of the No Grazing Alternative: Removal of livestock from the allotment is not expected to markedly enhance/improve vegetation resources for use as forage and cover by sage-grouse. The most noticeable difference would likely result in slight improvements in ground cover density and the availability of succulent upland and channel-based forbs which serve as cover and forage for female sage-grouse and their broods.

Mitigation: None

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for Threatened & Endangered species: Public Land Health Standards greater sage-grouse are currently being met. There is no evidence to suggest that proposed grazing practices would have an adverse influence on populations, available extent of suitable habitat, or the reproductive activities sage-grouse and would, therefore, have no influence on continued meeting of the land health standard. The no grazing alternative is not expected to alter habitat conditions ascribed to the proposed action.

WASTES, HAZARDOUS OR SOLID

Affected Environment: There are no known hazardous or other solid wastes on the subject lands. No hazardous materials are known to have been used, stored or disposed of at sites included in the proposed action.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: No listed or extremely hazardous materials in excess of threshold quantities are proposed for use in this project. While commercial preparations of fuels and lubricants containing hazardous constituents may be used in small quantities from time to time, they would be stored, used and transported in a manner consistent with applicable laws, and the generation of hazardous wastes would not be anticipated. A small quantity of solid wastes, in the form of excess supplies, wrappers and assorted scrap, could be generated during construction or maintenance activities.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: No hazardous or other solid wastes would be generated under the no-action alternative.

Mitigation: The permittee should be required to collect and dispose of all solid wastes generated by her/his activities.

WATER QUALITY, SURFACE AND GROUND (includes a finding on Standard 5)

Affected Environment: The proposed permit renewal will be situated in the Pool Creek, Iron Spring Wash, Yampa River, Mud Springs Draw, and Robinson Draw watersheds. Pool Creek and Iron Spring Wash are tributaries to the Green River and have been placed in stream segment 20 of the Green River Basin. The Yampa River, Mudsprings Draw, and Robinson Draw catchment areas are all located in stream segment 14 of the Yampa River Basin.

A review of the Colorado's 1989 Nonpoint Source Assessment Report (plus updates), the 305(b) report, the 303(d) list and the Unified Watershed Assessment was done to see if any water quality concerns have been identified. The State has classified both stream segments 20 of the Green River Basin and segment 14 of the Yampa River Basin as "Use Protected". The antidegradation review requirements in the Antidegradation Rule are not applicable to waters designated use-protected. For those waters, only the protection specified in each reach will apply.

Stream segment 20 has been designated by the state as beneficial for the following uses: Warm Aquatic Life 2, Recreation 1a, and Agriculture. Minimum standards for four parameters have been listed, these parameters are: dissolved oxygen = 5.0 mg/l, pH = 6.5 - 9.0, Fecal Coliform = 200/100 ml, and 126/100 ml E. coli.

Stream segment 14 has been designated by the state as beneficial for the following uses: Warm Aquatic Life 2, Recreation 2, and Agriculture. Minimum standards for four parameters have been listed, these parameters are: dissolved oxygen = 5.0 mg/l, pH = 6.5 - 9.0, Fecal Coliform = 200/100 ml, and 126/100 ml E. coli. Stream segment 14 retained its Recreation Class 2 designation after sufficient evidence was received that a Recreation Class 1a use was unattainable.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Reductions in vegetal cover due to grazing (and drought conditions) may leave soils exposed to erosional processes increasing sedimentation to lower reaches of the affected watersheds. However, with implementation of the proposed grazing permit no adverse environmental consequences are anticipated.

Environmental Consequences of the No Grazing Alternative: None

Mitigation: None

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for water quality: Water quality within the area of the proposed action currently meets water quality standards established by the state. No adverse impacts to water quality will result as a response to the implementation of the proposed permit renewal.

WETLANDS AND RIPARIAN ZONES (includes a finding on Standard 2)

Affected Environment: Within the north pasture of the Red Rocks allotment, a small intermittent riparian zone is located on BLM lands along the upper drainage of Cottonwood Canyon for approximately 0.25 miles (T6N, R103W, NW, Sec 29). This riparian zone is situated between the National Park Service's Dinosaur National Monument (DNM) lands located upstream and downstream. Historically (pre-1985) the allotment and associated riparian zones received higher use from livestock (95 cows versus 65).

A Proper Functioning Condition (PFC) assessment was conducted on 09/08/05 and designated this channel as upper Cottonwood Canyon, Segment 1. The BLM riparian stretch is restricted in

nature due to limited water availability, as no surface water was observed during the PFC assessment. Flows within the channel are relegated due to the upstream reservoir and natural limitation of water availability. Two reservoirs are located along the channel, one located in the upper portion on DNM lands and another located downstream on BLM lands. These reservoirs hold water for an extended period of time and had water during the 09/08/05 inspection, thus helping to support this riparian community. However, these reservoirs can go dry in late summer which influences the extent of the riparian zone. Small intermittent patches of Nebraska sedge and rushes are located within the channel along with meadow barley that is found more common in the drier stretches.

This upper Cottonwood Canyon system was rated as Functioning at Risk with an Upward Trend. Concerns noted during the 09/08/05 inventory included cattle/wildlife trailing within channel, use levels, no surface water, and a small/stable nick point within channel related to a dry wallow. Positive aspects of the system included no active down cutting, intact structural integrity, and diverse composition of vegetation for maintenance and recovery of riparian characteristics.

The south pasture does not contain any known wetlands and/or riparian communities on BLM administered lands.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Cattle make use of the Upper Cottonwood Canyon stretch of riparian as the segment is flanked by reservoirs, which serve as livestock watering localities, on each end of the stretch. The proposed season of use within the North pasture (08/16-10/04) is after the vegetative growing season, which provides ample opportunity for riparian plant growth each year. Therefore, the riparian community has sufficiently grown before grazing begins to provide adequate reproduction capabilities and the system would be able to recover and replenish reserves after being grazed by livestock.

Under the proposed action, the current functionality of the riparian community would remain in an upward trend, thus providing for the requirements of the riparian system to transition into a greater stable state.

Environmental Consequences of the No Grazing Alternative: Riparian conditions within the Red Rocks allotment would continue in its current state of an upward trend. However, with the absence of livestock use, the riparian community would experience an increase in riparian plant growth that would provide a greater opportunity for achieving full potential within a shorter time frame. Yet the restrictions of the riparian system are related to limited water availability which would remain unchanged without grazing.

Mitigation: None

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for riparian systems: There are 0.25 miles of intermittent riparian on BLM administered lands associated with the proposed action. The proposal will maintain the ability of this system to continue in an upward trend until reaching full Proper Functioning Condition.

CRITICAL ELEMENTS NOT PRESENT OR NOT AFFECTED:

No flood plains, prime and unique farmlands, Wilderness, or Wild and Scenic Rivers exist within the area affected by the proposed action. There are also no Native American religious or environmental justice concerns associated with the proposed action.

NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS

The following elements **must** be addressed due to the involvement of Standards for Public Land Health:

SOILS (includes a finding on Standard 1)

Affected Environment: The following data is a product of an order III soil survey conducted by the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). The Soil Survey delineates individual soil unit polygons and associated ecological sites. The table below is derived from the Moffat County Soil Survey and is a breakdown of the individual soil units and associated ecological sites on BLM administered lands. A complete summary of this information can be found at the White River Field Office.

Red Rocks Allotment, North Pasture			
Data	Soil Unit	Ecological Site	BLM Acres
205	Emlin loam, 1-12% slopes	Deep Loam	170.16
204	Layoint-Moosed-Berlake Complex, 1-20% slopes	Sandy Foothills/Sandy Foothills/Deep Loam	262.12
207	Rencot-Duffymont Complex, 1-25% slopes	Dry Exposure/Stoney Loam	86.56
Totals:			518.84

Red Rocks Allotment, South Pasture			
Data	Soil Unit	Ecological Site	BLM Acres
34F	Coutis fine sandy loam, 25-65% slopes	Sandy Foothills	3.62
205	Emlin loam, 1-12% slopes	Deep Loam	21.75
214	Holter-Detra variant complex, 3-25% slopes, Ex Stoney	Mountain Loam/Deep Loam	29.42
204	Layoint-Moosed-Berlake Complex, 1-20% slopes	Sandy Foothills/Sandy Foothills/Deep Loam	13.22
207	Rencot-Duffymont Complex, 1-25% slopes	Dry Exposure/Stoney Loam	119.71
103	Ustorthents, Frigid-Borolls Complex, steep	None	169.83
Totals:			357.55

Soils that are occupied with plant communities rated as a mid seral, late seral, Potential Natural Community (PNC), or early seral sites with adequate post fire vegetative rehabilitation have sufficient cover of desirable plant species to produce adequate litter and ground cover to minimize runoff and provide for soil protection (refer to the Vegetation section below for ratings). These soils are meeting the Colorado Public Land Health Standard for upland soils. The Red Rocks allotment has 855 BLM acres (97%) achieving or moving towards achieving for

Standards for Public Land Health (refer to the below Vegetation section of this document). Thus, these 855 acres, or 97% of the Red Rocks allotment, currently offer the requirements to maintain soil integrity and structure through adequate ground cover of vegetation.

Soils that have been rated as not meeting Public Land Health Standards account for 22 acres (see table below). These acres are related to historic grazing practices that led to the denuding of vegetative ground cover within the Dry Exposure/Stoney Loam ecological site. These sites have relatively rocky and shallow soils which are located on windswept ridges, and have a significant cover of exposed stone. After these areas loss adequate ground cover to provide soil protection, soil loss occurred within plant interspaces leaving many plant species pedestaled. This level of pedestaling signifies a loss of soil around the vegetative root structures that provided resistance to erosion. Current root structure of the vegetation is holding the soils in place; however pedestaling has occurred around these root masses. Overall, current ground cover on these sites has the amount of desired vegetative ground cover that is expected to provide soil protection in consideration of past soil loss.

Red Rocks Allotment			
Acres not Meeting Public Land Health Standards			
Data	Soil Unit	Ecological Site	BLM Acres
207	Rencot-Duffymont Complex, 1-25% slopes	Dry Exposure/Stoney Loam	22
Totals:			22

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Sufficient litter accumulation, canopy cover, and ground cover would continue on the mid, late, and PNC seral stages (855 acres) due to grazing at an equitable level within the grazing capacity of the rangelands as provided under the proposed action. Ground cover of native perennial plant species and litter accumulation are central in the protection and stabilization of soils. Therefore, these sites are already at and/or near potential, are meeting health standards, and will not be appreciably influenced by the proposal.

Soils with pedestaled plant communities (22 acres) will mostly continue at their current state because they have crossed a threshold of permanent soil loss. This situation is nearly irreversible regardless of the livestock management. Historical grazing practices (spring use, over utilization, sheep bedgrounds, etc.) have created the situation in which soil loss occurred within the plant interspaces.

Current vegetative cover within these pedestaled localities is at an anticipated level in consideration of the areas soil loss in a rocky and relatively shallow soil site. The proposal will continue to provide current vegetative cover and rock structure that are adequate within these sites to prevent future soil loss.

Environmental Consequences of the No Grazing Alternative: Under a no grazing by livestock alternative, most localities that are being grazed by cattle would experience a short-term increase in both perennial plant cover and soil surface litter accumulation. Mid seral ecological sites would likely experience the greatest benefit of increased perennial plant cover and would continue to meet Public Land Health Standards. On ecological sites not meeting

Health Standards (22 acres), the majority of areas are not expected to appreciably change in soil protection because they have crossed a threshold of soil loss resulting in pedestaled plant communities. Soils associated with late and PNC ecological sites would continue to meet standards and experience minimal changes in plant species composition and diversity.

Mitigation: None

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Wildlife, Aquatic and Wildlife, Terrestrial): Soils that are not meeting Health Standards are mostly due to the lack of soil protection caused from erosion that has resulted in pedestaled plant communities. All other soil types are currently meeting standards and make up the bulk of acres on all allotments (855 acres, 97%). Implementation of the proposed action will enhance the ability of the rangelands to meet and improve in meeting Public Land Health Standards.

VEGETATION (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: The following table lists the plant community appearance for the ecological sites or woodland types on allotments associated with the proposed action, along with the predominant plant species comprising the composition of each community. Forb species, though important to the diversity of a community and making up to 25 to 30% of the composition within several of the plant communities listed, are not presented in the following table because they generally are not contributors to the appearance or dominance of the community.

Ecological Site / Woodland Type	Plant Community Appearance	Predominant Plant Species in the Plant Community
Deep Loam	Grassland	Bluebunch wheatgrass, muttongrass, needle-and-thread, western wheatgrass, slender wheatgrass, big sagebrush, serviceberry, snowberry.
Dry Exposure	Grassland	Beardless bluebunch wheatgrass, needle-and-thread, June grass, Indian rice grass, fringed sage, buckwheats
Mountain Loam	Grass / Open Shrub Shrubland	Mountain brome, slender wheatgrass, western wheatgrass, Letterman and Columbia needle grasses, mountain big sagebrush, bitterbrush, low rabbitbrush, snowberry, serviceberry
Stony Foothills	Grass / Open Shrub Shrubland	Beardless bluebunch wheatgrass, western wheatgrass, needle-and-thread, June grass, Indian rice grass, fringed sage, Wyoming big sagebrush, black sage, serviceberry, pinyon and juniper
Stoney Loam	Grass/Shrubland	Bluebunch wheatgrass, Indian ricegrass, needle grasses, muttongrass, western wheatgrass, serviceberry, bitterbrush, bog sagebrush, snowberry

The majority of the north and south pasture of the Red Rocks allotment are a Deep Loam, Dry Exposure, and Sand Foothills ecological sites. These areas are mostly dominated by a combination of black sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata ssp. nova*) and mountain sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata ssp. vaseyana*) with a grass understory mainly consisting of western

wheatgrass (*Agropyron smithii*), needle-and-thread grass (*Stipa comata*), June grass (*Koeleria cristata*), and sandberg bluegrass (*Poa secunda*). Common forbs within these pastures are globe mallow (*Sphaeralcea sp.*), lupine (*Lupinus sp.*), arrowleaf balsamroot (*Balsamorhiza sagittata*), buckwheat (*Eriogonum sp.*), and phlox (*Phlox austromontana*).

The following table shows the seral rating used by the BLM to rate rangeland vegetation communities in comparison to the Potential Natural Plant Community (PNC) for a particular ecological site. Mid, late, and PNC ecological sites represent plant communities within acceptable thresholds for healthy communities and are within acceptable levels of desired plant communities (mid to PNC) as defined in the White River ROD/RMP

ECOLOGICAL SITE SIMILARITY RATINGS	
Seral Rating	% Similarity to the Potential Natural Plant Community (PNC)
Potential Natural community (PNC)	76-100% composition of species in the PNC
Late-Seral	51-75% composition of species in the PNC
Mid-Seral	26-50% composition of species in the PNC
Early-Seral	0-25% composition of species in the PNC

The following tables show an estimate of the public land acreage falling within one of the seral ratings for each ecological site on allotments associated with this permit renewal. These estimates are based upon professional judgments of the Rangeland Management Specialist trained in the use of the rating system. Nearly all ecological sites were visited during the 2005 field seasons for a plant community assessment of the Colorado Public Land Health Standards for each allotment. Historical grazing practices (spring use, over utilization, etc.), lack of post fire rehabilitation, and prolong drought conditions have created the situation in which most of the early seral plant communities do not meet the rangeland health standards.

Red Rocks Allotment, North Pasture Ecological Site Similarity Rating						
Ecological Site	Total BLM ACRES	PNC	Late Seral	Mid Seral	Early Seral	BLM Acres Classified
Deep Loam	170	125	28	17	0	170
Sandy Foothills /Sandy Foothills /Deep Loam	262	216	31	15	0	262
Dry Exposure/Stoney Loam	87	27	22	16	22	87
Total:	519	368	81	48	22	519
% BLM Acres Classified:		71%	16%	9%	4%	100%

Red Rocks Allotment, South Pasture Ecological Site Similarity Rating						
Ecological Site	Total BLM ACRES	PNC	Late Seral	Mid Seral	Early Seral	BLM Acres Classified
Sandy Foothills	4	4	0	0	0	4
Deep Loam	22	18	4	0	0	22

Red Rocks Allotment, South Pasture						
Ecological Site Similarity Rating						
Ecological Site	Total BLM ACRES	PNC	Late Seral	Mid Seral	Early Seral	BLM Acres Classified
Mountain Loam/Deep Loam	29	22	7	0	0	29
Sandy Foothills/Sandy Foothills/Deep Loam	13	13	0	0	0	13
Dry Exposure/Stoney Loam	120	95	18	7	0	120
None-Ustorthents, Frigid-Borolls Complex	170	145	15	10	0	170
Total:	358	297	44	17	0	358
% BLM Acres Classified:		83%	12%	5%	0%	100%

As shown within the south and north pastures of the Red Rocks allotment, 497 BLM acres (94%) in the north pasture and 358 acres (100%) in the south pasture have ecological sites that represent plant communities within acceptable thresholds for healthy communities and within acceptable levels of desired plant communities (mid to PNC) as defined in the White River ROD/RMP. Vegetation production and species composition on these 855 total BLM acres provide adequate cover for soil protection and vegetative production to meet Colorado Public Land Health Standards.

A significant portion of the early seral acres are related to historic grazing practices that led to the denuding of vegetative ground cover within the Dry Exposure/Stoney Loam ecological site. These sites have relatively rocky and shallow soils which are located on windswept ridges. After these areas loss adequate ground cover to provide soil protection, soil loss occurred within plant interspaces leaving many plant species pedestaled. Current vegetative ground cover on these sites has the amount of cover expected in consideration of soil loss to provide soil protection and plant maintenance.

Noels Contracting has recently conducted a brush removal treatment (mowing) in a mountain sagebrush community on private lands in the south pasture. This action occurred typically within the upper drainage of Red Rock Canyon. The suppression of mountain sagebrush dominance within these treatment areas increased ground cover of the native understory of grasses such as western wheatgrass, sandberg bluegrass, and needle-and-thread-grass. Therefore, the treatment has increased available forage for livestock and big game wildlife.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: All grazing will be within the rangeland's carrying capacity (AUMs) to meet Public Land Health Standards and goals set forth in the RMP (see Rangeland Management Section). Current vegetation is meeting the requirements of providing a healthy rangeland vegetative composition and species diversity that is capable of supplying forage at a sustained yield to meet the demand for livestock grazing within the dominant mountain sagebrush community. Therefore, vegetation communities on BLM administrated lands will have the opportunity to maintain themselves in a productive manner, provide sufficient ground cover, and meet nutrient requirements to maintain a favorable ecological presence in the plant community.

The proposed grazing system would have a neutral to slightly positive impact on PNC and late seral ecological sites on all allotments, as they are already meeting or exceeding the standards for

rangeland health. Also, most of the early seral sites not meeting standards would typically continue at their current state unless some influencing agent occurred, because most of these sites have crossed a threshold that maintains these early seral sites at their current stage.

Environmental Consequences of the No Grazing Alternative: Under a no grazing by livestock alternative, most localities that are being grazed by cattle would experience a short-term increase in both perennial plant cover and soil surface litter accumulation. Mid seral ecological sites would likely experience the greatest benefit of increased perennial plant cover. On early seral ecological sites not meeting Health Standards such as the Dry Exposure/Stoney Loam ecological site, the majority of areas are not expected to change in perennial plant cover because they have crossed a threshold of soil loss. The PNC ecological sites would continue to meet standards and experience minimal changes in plant species composition and diversity.

Mitigation: None

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Wildlife, Aquatic and Wildlife, Terrestrial): The 22 acres of early seral communities are mostly not meeting the Standards due to soil loss within plant interspaces. 855 acres of all other seral communities (Mid – PNC) make up the majority of acres (97%) on the Red Rocks allotment. Implementation of the proposed action will maintain and improve the ability of the rangelands to meet the Standards in the future.

WILDLIFE, AQUATIC (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: There is no aquatic wildlife or habitat that is potentially affected by the proposed action.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: None

Environmental Consequences of the No Grazing Alternative: None

Mitigation: None

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Vegetation and Wildlife, Terrestrial): The proposed action would have no conceivable influence on aquatic wildlife or habitat conditions addressed in the Standards.

WILDLIFE, TERRESTRIAL (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: The big sagebrush, pinyon-juniper communities are used by deer and elk during the summer months (May – October), although use may extend into December depending upon snow levels. In the northern pasture, big game use is light in those allotments lacking adequate cover and in close proximity to the park highway. Big game use is more prevalent in the northeast section of the northern pasture due in part to increased cover and

distance from a well-traveled road. A small population of pronghorn (approximately 20 animals) also makes use of the allotment during the summer months although use is generally limited and dispersed.

While raptors may opportunistically forage throughout the area, the shrubland communities, interspersed with younger-aged pinyon-juniper, typically do not provide adequate nesting substrate for woodland raptors. Non-game bird communities in the allotment are representative of Wyoming big sagebrush shrublands and xeric pinyon-juniper woodlands with no apparent deficiencies in composition or abundance (see Migratory Bird section).

Small mammal populations are poorly documented, however, the 14 or so species that are likely to occur in this area display broad ecological tolerance and are widely distributed throughout the Great Basin and/or Rocky Mountain regions. No narrowly distributed or highly specialized species or subspecific populations are known this allotment.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: It is unlikely that continued grazing would negatively impact the extent or quality of habitat available for terrestrial wildlife within the allotment. There is no evidence to suggest that current levels of cumulative use by cattle and big game are causing inappropriate or potentially damaging levels of use on plant vigor or shifts in composition in either pasture. Under the current grazing schedule, livestock use within the northern pasture takes place during the dormant season (mid-August through October) and therefore has minimal impacts on quality of herbaceous ground cover. Although livestock use is concurrent with the growing season within the southern pasture, lack of water resources within the BLM portion of the pasture deters extensive use by cattle. Proposed livestock grazing management would have no direct influence on breeding or wintering raptors.

Environmental Consequences of the No Grazing Alternative: It is suspected that the influence of the no-grazing alternative on big game and non-game wildlife would differ little from the proposed action. Removal of livestock may provide minor increases in herbaceous residuals as a forage and/or a supplemental cover base for non-hibernating small mammals (e.g., voles) and early ground nesting birds (e.g., horned larks). Although likely to be small and discountable, any positive response of small mammal or non-game bird populations to enhanced habitat conditions may yield a more consistently abundant and available prey base for these birds and their broods.

Mitigation: None

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Vegetation and Wildlife, Aquatic): The Public Land Health standard for terrestrial wildlife communities in this allotment is currently being met at the landscape scale. There is no evidence to suggest that current grazing practices are aggravating deficiencies in the utility or available extent of wildlife habitat.

OTHER NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS: For the following elements, only those brought forward for analysis will be addressed further.

Non-Critical Element	NA or Not Present	Applicable or Present, No Impact	Applicable & Present and Brought Forward for Analysis
Access and Transportation		X	
Cadastral Survey	X		
Fire Management	X		
Forest Management	X		
Geology and Minerals	X		
Hydrology/Water Rights	X		
Law Enforcement		X	
Noise	X		
Paleontology	X		
Rangeland Management			X
Realty Authorizations			X
Recreation		X	
Socio-Economics		X	
Visual Resources		X	
Wild Horses	X		

RANGELAND MANAGEMENT

Affected Environment: Noels Contracting, Inc. is the authorized grazing permit holder for the north and south pastures of the Red Rocks allotment (06371), thus holding preference to the existing grazing permit (0501401).

The following tables show an estimated livestock carrying capacity (Animal Unit Month, AUM) broken down by surface ownership (BLM and Private) for the Red Rocks allotment. An AUM is the amount of forage necessary for the sustenance of one cow and calf for a period of one month. The tables are broken down by acres within a soil unit polygon and acres/AUM for each soil unit, which determines AUMs when divided. Also, these tables below are based upon a moderate stocking level that is generally less than the stocking rates recommended by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) for the specific ecological sites. The reason for this is in consideration of a moderate stoking level that meets Public Land Health Standards in relation to the rangeland's carrying capacity and current rangeland conditions. Under management by Noels Contracting, these allotments have been stocked at a moderate level.

Red Rocks Allotment (06371), North Pasture, Livestock Grazing Capacity for BLM Lands					
	Soil Unit	Ecological Site	BLM Acres	Acres / AUM	BLM AUMs
205	Emlin loam, 1-12% slopes	Deep Loam	170.16	7	24
204	Layoint-Moosed-Berlake Complex, 1-20% slopes	Sandy Foothills/Sandy Foothills/Deep Loam	262.12	8	33
207	Rencot-Duffymont Complex, 1-25% slopes	Dry Exposure/Stoney Loam	86.56	10	9
Totals:			518.84		66

Red Rocks Allotment (06371), North Pasture, Livestock Grazing Capacity for BLM Lands					
	Soil Unit	Ecological Site	BLM Acres	Acres / AUM	BLM AUMs
Acres/AUM					8

Red Rocks Allotment (06371), North Pasture, Livestock Grazing Capacity for Private Lands					
	Soil Unit	Ecological Site	Pvt Acres	Acres / AUM	Pvt AUMs
205	Emlin loam, 1-12% slopes	Deep Loam	145.10	7	21
204	Layoint-Moosed-Berlake Complex, 1-20% slopes	Sandy Foothills/Sandy Foothills/Deep Loam	12.38	8	2
207	Rencot-Duffymont Complex, 1-25% slopes	Dry Exposure/Stoney Loam	181.08	10	18
103	Ustorthents, Frigid-Borolls Complex, steep	None	35.71	18	2
Totals:			374.27		43
Acres/AUM					9

Red Rocks Allotment (06371), South Pasture, Livestock Grazing Capacity for BLM Lands					
	Soil Unit	Ecological Site	BLM Acres	Acres / AUM	BLM AUMs
34F	Coutis fine sandy loam, 25-65% slopes	Sandy Foothills	3.62	7	1
205	Emlin loam, 1-12% slopes	Deep Loam	21.75	5	4
214	Holter-Detra variant complex, 3-25% slopes, ExStoney	Mountain Loam/Deep Loam	29.42	6	5
204	Layoint-Moosed-Berlake Complex, 1-20% slopes	Sandy Foothills/Sandy Foothills/Deep Loam	13.22	8	2
207	Rencot-Duffymont Complex, 1-25% slopes	Dry Exposure/Stoney Loam	119.71	7	17
103	Ustorthents, Frigid-Borolls Complex, steep	None	169.83	13	13
Totals:			357.55		42
Acres/AUM					9

Red Rocks Allotment (06371), South Pasture, Livestock Grazing Capacity for Private Lands					
	Soil Unit	Ecological Site	Pvt Acres	Acres / AUM	Pvt AUMs
34F	Coutis fine sandy loam, 25-65% slopes	Sandy Foothills	48.67	6	8
205	Emlin loam, 1-12% slopes	Deep Loam	6.63	5	1
214	Holter-Detra variant complex, 3-25% slopes, ExStoney	Mountain Loam/Deep Loam	79.26	6	13
204	Layoint-Moosed-Berlake Complex, 1-20% slopes	Sandy Foothills/Sandy Foothills/Deep Loam	1.12	6	0
207	Rencot-Duffymont Complex, 1-25% slopes	Dry Exposure/Stoney Loam	491.82	7	70
103	Ustorthents, Frigid-Borolls Complex, steep	None	231.61	8	29
Totals:			859.11		121
Acres/AUM					7

The following table (Acres & AUM Breakdown) is a summarization of the individual Livestock Grazing Capacity tables above. The Percent Public Land (% PL), which is the percentage of BLM AUMs in relation to total AUMs, was determined for each pasture of the Red Rocks allotment.

Acres & AUM Breakdown for Noels Contracting, Inc (Red Rocks Allotment): Livestock Grazing Capacity										
Pastures	BLM AUMs	BLM Acres/AUM	Pvt AUMs	Pvt Acres/AUM	Tot AUMs: (BLM, Pvt)	% PL	BLM Acres	Pvt Acres	Total Acres	% BLM Acres

Acres & AUM Breakdown for Noels Contracting, Inc (Red Rocks Allotment):										
Livestock Grazing Capacity										
Pastures	BLM AUMs	BLM Acres/AUM	Pvt AUMs	Pvt Acres/AUM	Tot AUMs: (BLM, Pvt)	% PL	BLM Acres	Pvt Acres	Total Acres	% BLM Acres
North	66	8	43	9	109	61%	518.8	374.3	893.1	58%
South	42	9	121	7	163	26%	357.6	859.1	1,216.7	29%
	108	8	164	8	272	40%	876	1,233	2,110	42%

Upon Noels Contracting's acquisition of the Red Rocks allotment in 1994, they rested the allotment from livestock grazing for two years to provide adequate regrowth opportunity of plant communities within the allotment.

Within the south pasture of the Red Rocks allotment, the majority of livestock grazing occurs on private lands due to limited water availability and varied topography on BLM administrated lands. This situation is shown by the Percent Public Land (% PL), which is the percentage of forage (AUMs) on BLM lands versus privately controlled lands, for the south pasture which is rated at 26% PL (see table above).

Within the north pasture, water is available for livestock use on BLM and private lands and the forage availability is rated at 61% PL (see table above). The topography is more uniform between BLM and private lands, thus allowing for greater livestock distribution throughout the pasture.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Refer to the Vegetation section of this document for an analysis of rangeland vegetation impacts. As outlined Proposed Grazing Permit table below, active AUMs in the north pasture (65 AUMs) and the south pasture (42 AUMs, 107 AUMs total) are within the livestock grazing capacity (66 + 42 = 108 AUMs) of the rangelands to support this livestock use in a sustainable manner.

Proposed Grazing Permit (0501401) for Noels Contracting, Inc.										
Allotment		Livestock		Date		% PL	BLM AUMs	Active AUMs	Susp. AUMs	Total AUMs
Name	No.	Number	Kind	On	Off					
Red Rocks -South Pasture	06371	65	C	06/01	08/15	26%	42	107	0	107
Red Rocks -North Pasture	06371	65	C	08/16	10/04	61%	65			

Utilization studies conducted on key grasses (i.e. needle-and-thread grass and western wheatgrass) after grazing in 2005 (operating under the proposed action/continuation of current management) showed BLM lands in the south pasture as a light (21-40%) level of use. Therefore, use levels are providing for ample opportunities for regrowth and seed production to sustain the site in a productive manner.

Use levels in the north pasture on BLM lands are typically higher than the south pasture due to greater water availability and topography. Yet utilization rates by livestock are still within BLM management objectives of sustaining the rangelands in a desired ecological condition.

The proposed action will enable Noels Contracting, Inc. to continue in function as a small cattle operator. The allotment is vital in meeting forage requirements of the ranch's cattle as they graze cattle on private hay fields in Rangely Colorado before entering the south pasture of the Red Rocks allotment and then are shipped back to Rangely in October after grazing the north pasture. Much of the available forage on the allotment is located on private lands, thus the proposed grazing permit will enable Noels Contracting, Inc. to utilize both public BLM allocated forage (107 AUMs) in conjunction with private land forage (164 AUMs).

Implementation of the proposed action will further maintain and enhance the ability of the rangelands to meet the various Public Land Health Standards in the future.

Environmental Consequences of the No Grazing Alternative: Under this alternative, Noels Contracting, Inc. would not have the ability to authorize their existing grazing permit (0501401) on the Red Rocks allotment. Therefore, the ranch would not have a viable cattle operation as the private land and associated forage are open to BLM administered lands and would not be economically or environmentally feasible to fence separate.

Noels Contracting's privately held forage that is available for livestock in the Red Rocks allotment accounts for 74% of the forage in the south pasture and 39% of the forage in the north pasture. Without the adjoining BLM grazing permits and associated forage, Noels Contracting would not be able to utilize this available forage on private lands as the private is open to BLM lands. Therefore, without the BLM allocated forage and/or private forage, it would place an economical burden on the ranch and it likely would not be able to continue in its current state as a cattle operation.

Mitigation: None

REALTY AUTHORIZATIONS

Affected Environment: Portions of the southern parcel in T.5N., R.103W., are in Oil and Gas (O&G) leases COC67413 and 67414. Those portions of the northern parcel located in 6th Principal Meridian, T.6N., R.103W., section 28, SW¹/₄NW¹/₄, NW¹/₄SW¹/₄, and section 29, SW¹/₄NW¹/₄, N¹/₂SW¹/₄, N¹/₂SE¹/₄, are on lands managed by the Dinosaur National Monument.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Future development of the O&G leases could impact the grazing allotment. Appropriate authorization for those portions within the Dinosaur National Monument should be addressed

Environmental Consequences of the No Grazing Alternative: none

Mitigation: Address appropriate authorization for those portions of the allotment that fall within the Dinosaur National Monument.

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS SUMMARY: Cumulative impacts from the proposed action would not exceed those discussed in the White River Resource Area RMP and/or White River Resource Area Grazing Management Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

PERSONS / AGENCIES CONSULTED: A Public Notice of the NEPA action is posted on the White River Field Office Internet website at the Colorado BLM Home Page asking for public input on Grazing Permit renewals and the assessment of public land health standards within the White River Field Office area. Local notification is published in the Rio Blanco Herald Times newspaper located here in Meeker, Colorado on a monthly basis. The Grazing Advisory Board was notified of impending Grazing Permit renewals. Also, individual letters are sent to the lessees/permittees informing them that their lease is up for renewal and request any information they want included in or taken into consideration during the renewal process.

INTERDISCIPLINARY REVIEW:

Name	Title	Area of Responsibility
Nate Dieterich	Hydrologist	Air Quality
Tamara Meagley	Natural Resource Specialist	Areas of Critical Environmental Concern
Tamara Meagley	Natural Resource Specialist	Threatened and Endangered Plant Species
Gabrielle Elliott	Archaeologist	Cultural Resources; Paleontological Resources
Jed Carling	Rangeland Specialist	Invasive, Non-Native Species
Lisa Belmonte	Wildlife Biologist	Migratory Birds; Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive Animal Species, Wildlife
Vern Rholl	Supervisory NRS	Wastes, Hazardous or Solid
Nate Dieterich	Hydrologist	Water Quality, Surface and Ground Hydrology and Water Rights
Jed Carling	Rangeland Specialist	Wetlands and Riparian Zones
Chris Ham	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Wilderness
Jed Carling	Rangeland Specialist	Soils; Vegetation
Lisa Belmonte	Wildlife Biologist	Wildlife Terrestrial and Aquatic
Chris Ham	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Access and Transportation
Ken Holsinger	Natural Resource Specialist	Fire Management
Robert Fowler	Forester	Forest Management
Paul Daggett	Mining Engineer	Geology and Minerals
Jed Carling	Rangeland Specialist	Rangeland Management
Linda Jones	Realty Specialist	Realty Authorizations
Chris Ham	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Recreation Visual Resources;
Valerie Dobrich	Natural Resource Specialist	Wild Horses

Finding of No Significant Impact/Decision Record (FONSI/DR)

CO-110-2005-122-EA

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)/RATIONALE: The environmental assessment and analyzing the environmental effects of the proposed action have been reviewed. The approved mitigation measures (listed below) result in a Finding of No Significant Impact on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not necessary to further analyze the environmental effects of the proposed action.

DECISION/RATIONALE: It is my decision to implement the proposed action to renew grazing permits #0501401 for a period of ten years for the Red Rocks grazing allotment as described in the proposed action with the addition of the below mitigation.

MITIGATION MEASURES:

1) The operator is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the project operations that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing historic or archaeological sites, or for collecting artifacts. If historic or archaeological materials are uncovered during any project or construction activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities in the immediate area of the find that might further disturb such materials, and immediately contact the authorized officer (AO). Within five working days the AO will inform the operator as to:

- whether the materials appear eligible for the National Register of Historic Places
- the mitigation measures the operator will likely have to undertake before the site can be used (assuming in situ preservation is not necessary)
- a timeframe for the AO to complete an expedited review under 36 CFR 800-11 to confirm, through the State Historic Preservation Officer, that the findings of the AO are correct and that mitigation is appropriate.

If the operator wishes, at any time, to relocate activities to avoid the expense of mitigation and/or the delays associated with this process, the AO will assume responsibility for whatever recordation and stabilization of the exposed materials may be required. Otherwise, the operator will be responsible for mitigation cost. The AO will provide technical and procedural guidelines for the conduct of mitigation. Upon verification from the AO that the required mitigation has been completed, the operator will then be allowed to resume construction.

2. Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(g) the holder of this authorization must notify the AO, by telephone, with written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony. Further, pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(c) and (d), you

must stop activities in the vicinity of the discovery and protect it for 30 days or until notified to proceed by the authorized officer.

3. The permittee should be required to collect and dispose of all solid wastes generated by her/his activities.

4. Address appropriate authorization for those portions of the allotment that fall within the Dinosaur National Monument.

COMPLIANCE/MONITORING: Refer to the Monitoring and Evaluation section within the proposed action of this document.

NAME OF PREPARER: Jed Carling

NAME OF ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR: Caroline Hollowed

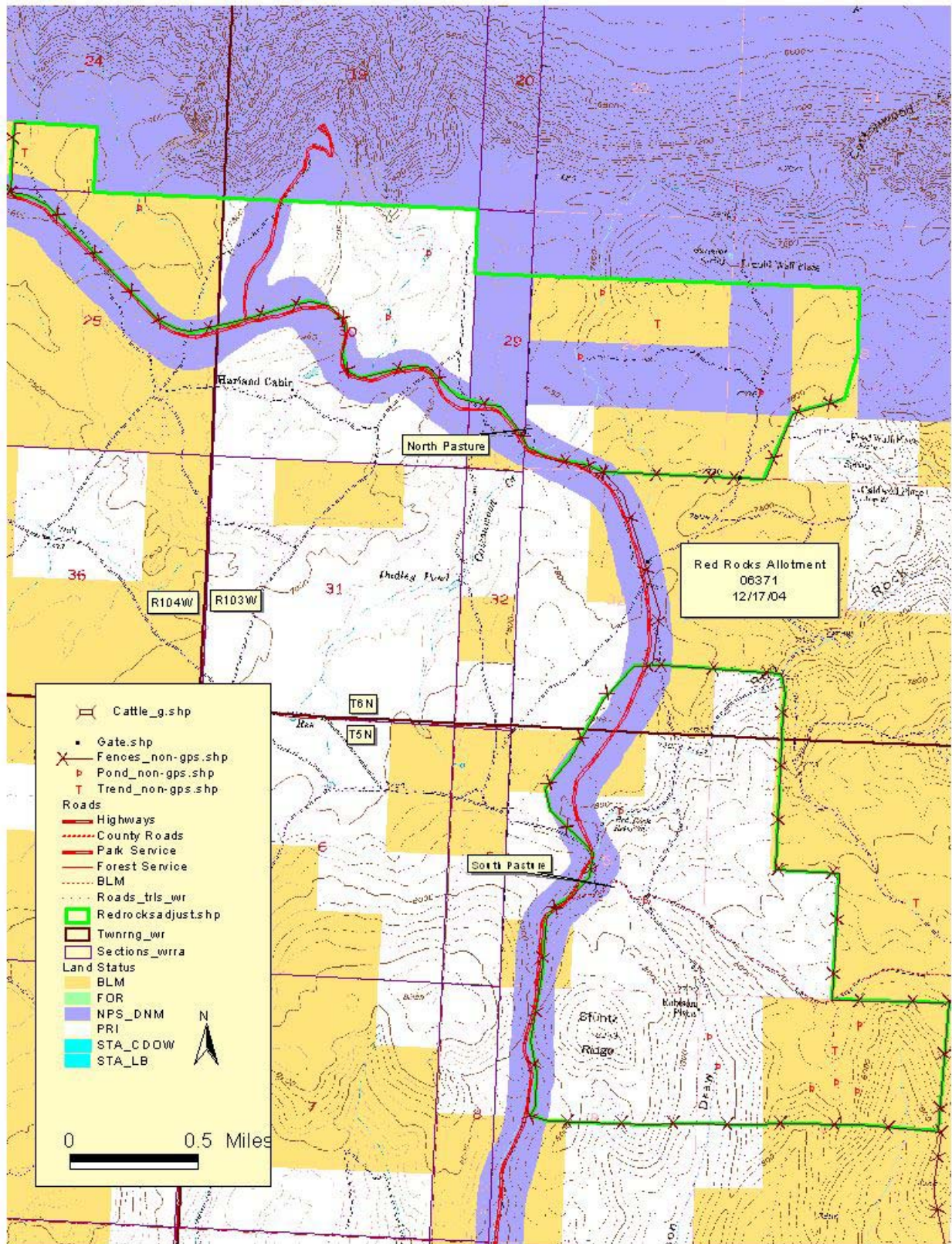
SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL:  Acting
Field Manager

DATE SIGNED: 10/06/05

ATTACHMENTS:

- Figure 1: Map of the Proposed Action
- General Location Map of the Proposed Action

Figure 1: Map of the Proposed Action



Location of Proposed Action CO-110-2005-122-EA

